


HERO LAYS

BY ALICE MILLIGAN



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BY ALICE MILLIGAN

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THIS BOOK, PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF
SOME EXILES IN THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC,
WHO CHERISH IRELAND'S HOPE, IS DEDICATED
TO

DR. GEORGE SIGERSON,

AS ONE TO WHOM THEY, WITH ME, WOULD
DESIRE TO YIELD A MEASURE OF THE HOMAGE
DUE TO HIS FAME AS A POET AND INTERPRETER
OF OUR NATIVE GAELIC BARDS; BUT ABOVE
ALL, IN RECOGNITION OF HIS STEADFAST
FRIENDSHIP TO CHARLES KICKHAM AND JOHN
O'LEARY

“beannaíct le caṡaib na b-ṡiann”

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A SONG OF FREEDOM

*In Cavan of little lakes,
As I was walking with the wind,
And no one seen beside me there,
There came a song into my mind :
It came as if the whispered voice
Of one, but none of human kind,
Who walked with me in Cavan then,
And he invisible as wind.*

*On Urris of Inish-Owen,
As I went up the mountain side,
The brook that came leaping down
Cried to me—for joy it cried ;
And when from off the summit far
I looked o'er land and water wide,
I was more joyous than the brook
That met me on the mountain side.*

*To Ara of Connacht's isles,
As I went sailing o'er the sea,
The wind's word, the brook's word,
The wave's word, was plain to me—
“As we are, though she is not
As we are, shall Banba be—
There is no King can rule the wind,
There is no fetter for the sea.”*

THE RETURN OF LUGH LAMH-FADA

LUGH LAMH-FADA, mighty and immortal,
Lordliest of the fosterlings of Mananaan mac Lir,
Far out of Erin, behind a fairy portal,
Tarried in bliss till his boyhood's ending year.

The whole world held no gladder place to dream in,
With honey of the heather fed and milk of magic cows,
Where flowers round the towers of apple-blossomed
Eman

Were mingled with the burdens of heavy-fruited boughs.

And the green leaves of spring, with the gold of autumn
weather,

Were lit by the light of unending eve and morn ;
For the sun and the moon stood o'er the hills together,
And looked upon the snowy vales, thick-sheafed with
yellow corn.

There, in those fair, far-off, sea-sundered places,
The islands of the kingdom of the Ocean-ruler's son,
He tarried many days among the bright De-Danaan races,
And all the wisdom of the world invisible he won.

Hosts came down from the future's misty regions,
Ghosts of buried heroes from rath and barrow flew ;
And the world's long dead, with her yet unbodied legions,
Walked and talked on Aran shore with Lugh.

THE RETURN OF LUGH LAMH-FADA

And they led him up to a peak upon the highland,
And bade him look unto Ocean's utmost rim,
Where the faint and lovely phantom of an island,
The dwelling of his father's race, was beckoning to him.

And they told how of old that island had been taken,
And made the prey of plunderers—the mockery of hate,
The poor of the land by their rightful lords forsaken,
Appalled by giant tyranny, oppressed by witching fate.
And the torture of the day and the darkening of the
morrow ;
The woe endured in Erin's isle through all his absent
years ;
Lugh heard of till his godlike heart was touched with
human sorrow,
And his glad immortal eyes were for the first time wet
with tears.

And the sun on high was powerless to hold him,
The moon in heaven had no might to make him stay,
So the bright De-Danaan people flocked beachward to
behold him

Mount upon his magic steed and ride upon his way,
O'er the high-flung wind-swung, emerald and amber
Over-arching, onward marching billows of the main,
That the light, bright hoof was powerful to clamber
As swiftly as it swept the sod on Aran's smoothest plain.

.

THE RETURN OF LUGH LAMH-FADA

And all the while, in Erin's isle, the clouds of sorrow
darken ;

The champion hand lets fall the brand, the lips of song
are dumb,

Or sing in wildernesses lone, since no man cares to
hearken

To wonder-chimes of long-gone times or tales of years to
come.

And the music-strings, like human things, mourn when
their masters sound them,

In lamentation wild and shrill, bewailing glories past ;

And the fetters of the captives have the rust of years
around them,

And the latest-buried champion by all lips is called
"the last."

So patient necks are bowed beneath the yoke of servile
labour,

Till lo ! What shining on the land ? What light along the
main ?

The glitter of a burnished shield, the glancing of a
sabre,

And Lugh Lamh-fada rides in glory back again.

On the light, bright steed that was powerful to
clamber

Without breaking any bubble of the swiftly-trodden
foam ;

O'er the high-flung, wind-swung emerald and amber,

Onward-sweeping, shoreward-leaping billows to his
home.

THE RETURN OF LUGH LAMH-FADA

And the land is lit with a strange unearthly beauty,
And patriot strength and courage are to every heart
restored ;
And boyhood leaps impatient at the trumpet-call of duty,
While maiden hands are hastening to gird him with a
sword ;
For Lugh has come from the beach, where bards have
hailed him,
While cliff and rock re-echo to the sound of battle-song ;
And the latest-buried warrior stands up where many
wailed him,
Arisen from the sepulchre to see them ride along.

And the world's long dead, in cairns of hill and hollow,
Have left their bones among the stones to hasten after
Lugh ;
While myriads of the yet unborn the march of freedom
follow,
And the mighty lords invisible are thronging out at Brugh.
And Lugh Lamh-fada, the child of an immortal,
Who came with the flame of the sunburst over sea,
Leads on the host, both man and ghost, against the
tyrant's portal.
The stronghold shakes ! the barrier breaks ! his father-
land is free.

THE WHITE WAVE FOLLOWING

*Written on a voyage through the
Hebrides. In memory of M. A.*

LIKE the white wave following
Our ship through changing waters,
The memory of your love is
In life that alters :
The clouds pass overhead,
And like clouds the islands
Flock up—and hurrying on
Float by on the blue of ocean ;
The sun goes, and the moon,
Along many mountains
Amid changing stars,
Into heaven uprolling,
New lochs and lands
In each hour illumines :
And all waves of the sea,
Tide-swept and wind-swayed
From morning unto night,
Move ceaselessly by us.

But against all winds
And all swift tide-races,
To all lochs and lands
And sea-girt lonely places,

THE WHITE WAVE FOLLOWING

Sunlit and moonlit,
Heaving and hollowing
Through wind-gleam, and glass-calm,
Comes one white wave following.

And like that white wave,
In the sunlit Sound of Jura,
Like that wave, bright-crested
Amid grey seas by Sanda,
On black rocks breaking
Around distant Rona,
Or in foam track fading
O'er a sea of slumber,
As we came from Canna
To Skye of your kindred :
Like that white wave, following
The ship through changing waters,
The memory of your love is
In life that alters.

BRIAN OF BANBA

BRIAN of Banba, all alone, up from the desert-places,
Came to stand where the festal throne of the lord of
Thomond's race is,
Came after tarrying long away till his cheeks were hunger-
hollow,
His voice grown hoarse in a thousand fights where he
called on his men to follow.
He had pillowed his head on the hard tree-roots, and slept
in the sun unshaded,
Till the gold that had shone in his curls was gone, and
the snow of his brow was faded ;
And where he came he was meanliest clad, 'midst the
nobles of the nation ;
Yet proudly he entered among them all, for this was his
brother's banquet-hall,
And he was a Prince Dalcassian !

Mahon, King of the clan Dal-Cas, throned in his palace
proudly,
Drank the mead from a costly glass, whilst his poet harping
loudly,
Traced in song his lineage long to the times of ancient
story,
And praised the prowess of Cennedigh's sons, and counted
their deeds of glory,

BRIAN OF BANBA

And chanted the fame of the chieftains all, the banquet-board surrounding.

But why does he turn to this stranger tall, for whom is his harp now sounding ?

“The king,” he says, “is a champion bold, and bold is each champion brother,

But Brian, the youngest, is bravest and strongest, and wiser than any other.”

The King rose up on his royal throne, and sorrowful was his gazing,

And greatly the envy grew in his heart at sound of such high appraising ;

For Mahon had dwelt in a palace fair, at peace with the land’s invader,

While Brian lurked in the wild-cat’s lair, and slept where the she-wolf laid her.

Mahon was clad in a robe of silk, a gift of a Dane chief’s sending ;

The only cloak that Brian had was torn by the brambles rending.

Mahon had called for the mead and wine from the hands of those that hasted ;

But the thin cold wine that the swan-flocks sip was the only wine that Brian’s lip

For a year and more had tasted.

“Brian, my brother,” said the King, in a tone of scornful wonder,

“Why dost thou come in beggar-guise our palace portals under ?

BRIAN OF BANBA

Where hast thou wandered since yester year, on what
venture of love hast thou tarried ?

Tell us the count of thy prey of deer, and what cattle-
herds thou hast harried.

Where is the mantle of silken fold, and the jewelled brooch
that bound it ?

In what wager lost was the band of gold that once thy
locks surrounded ?

Where hast thou left the courtly train that befitteth thy
princely station ?

The hundred high-born youths I gave, the chosen sons of
the chieftains brave

Of the warriors Dalcassian ?”

“I have hunted no deer since yester year, I have harried
no neighbour’s cattle,

I have wooed no love, I have joined no game, save the
kingly game of battle ;

The Danes were my prey by night and day, in their forts
of hill and hollow,

And I come from the desert-lands alone, since none are
alive to follow.

Some were slain on the plundered plain, and some in the
midnight marching ;

Some were lost in the winter floods, and some by the fever
parching ;

Some have perished by wounds of spears, and some by the
shafts of bowmen ;

And some by hunger and some by thirst, and all are dead ;
but they slaughtered first

Their tenfold more of their foemen.”

BRIAN OF BANBA

The King leaped down from his cushioned throne and grasped the hand of his brother :

“Brian, though youngest, thou’rt bravest and strongest, and nobler than any other ;

So choose at thy will of my flocks on the hill, and take of my treasure golden,

Were it even the ring on my royal hand, or this broidered cloak I am rolled in.”

Brian smiled : “You will need them all as award of bardic measure ;

I want no cattle from out your herds, no share of your shining treasure ;

But grant me now”—and he turned to look on the listening warriors’ faces—

“A hundred more of the clan Dal Cas, to follow me over plain and pass :

To die, as fitteth the brave Dal Cas, at war with the Outland races.”

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL

WHEN I was a little girl,
In a garden playing,
A thing was often said
To chide us delaying :

When after sunny hours,
At twilight's falling,
Down through the garden walks
Came our old nurse calling.

“Come in ! for it's growing late,
And the grass will wet ye !
Come in ! or when it's dark
The Fenians will get ye.”

Then, at this dreadful news,
All helter-skelter,
The panic-struck little flock
Ran home for shelter.

And round the nursery fire
Sat still to listen,
Fifty bare toes on the hearth,
Ten eyes a-glisten.

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL

To hear of a night in March,
And loyal folk waiting,
To see a great army of men
Come devastating.

An army of Papists grim,
With a green flag o'er them,
Red-coats and black police
Flying before them.

But God (Who our nurse declared
Guards British dominions)
Sent down a deep fall of snow
And scattered the Fenians.

“But somewhere they’re lurking yet,
Maybe they’re near us,”
Four little hearts pit-a-pat
Thought “Can they hear us?”

Then the wind-shaken pane
Sounded like drumming ;
“Oh!” they cried, “tuck us in,
The Fenians are coming!”

Four little pairs of hands
In the cots where she led those,
Over their frightened heads
Pulled up the bedclothes.

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL

But one little rebel there,
Watching all with laughter,
Thought “ When the Fenians come
I’ll rise and go after.”

Wished she had been a boy
And a good deal older—
Able to walk for miles
With a gun on her shoulder.

Able to lift aloft
That Green Flag o’er them
(Red-coats and black police
Flying before them).

And, as she dropped asleep,
Was wondering whether
God, if they prayed to Him,
Would give fine weather.

DECTERA OF THE DUN

DECTERA walks on the height,
Red is her raiment,
Forty heifers white,
For the brooch on her bosom bright,
For the round brooch, beaten and light,
Were given in payment,
On the walls of the Dun on the height,
She walks, she waits in the night—
Red is her raiment.

Her veil is as white as the snow;
There is gold on its border.
There is bright gold clasping the flow
Of her locks to the girdle low,
Hair rings row upon row,
And pearls in order;
But the tears are ever aflow
Under the veil like snow
With the golden border.

Pride of her race and name
Was her undoing,
Once only and never since,

DECTERA OF THE DUN

Only once came the Prince,
That way a-wooing ;
Pride of her royal name
Made her cold when he came ;
Pride of her father's fame
Was her undoing.

Girsha dwells in the valley ;
Grey is her gown :
Her hut 'mid heather brown
Of birch and sally
Was woven as round to see
As the hive of a golden bee ;
And milking kine was she
As he rode to the valley.

Up at the door of the dun,
In the mists of the morning,
Dectera walks until noon,
Watches till rise of the moon,
Waits for him late and soon
In her gay adorning ;
But over the curve of her min
Her face grows mournful and thin,
And the eyes that he might not win
Have lost their scorning.

He dwells with his soul's delight ;
Her love he's earning.
Kept in her cottage white,

DECTERA OF THE DUN

While lonely and long in the night
Dectera watches the light
Of their hearth fire burning ;
And through the sorrowful years
With passion, petitions, and tears,
She waits, but no sign appears
Of the Prince returning.

THE PORTENT

OVER moving waters and surges white,
Which no stars illumine and no moon light,
A ship comes swiftly sailing, without wind blown,
To a Northern strand in Eri, from a land unknown.

Kindler of the beacon, that warns from Fanad's coast,
Say if there went by you a vessel like a ghost ;
And told she by signal her port and her name ?
"The weird ship you ask of not this way came."

Watcher o'er the billows from sea-girt Tor-I,
Say if at early night any ship went by ?
And came she from the Northland, or came she from the
West,
Or rose she like a phantom from ocean's grey breast ?

"We saw ere utter darkness gloomed on our isle,
And the sea in twilight-silver glimmered a while,
The gulls rise up screeching from their roosts by the sea,
As if a ship went by them ; but no ship saw we.

"The first place we saw her was at the harbour bar,
The light at her masthead burst like a star ;
Without wind to bring her she came to the strand :
God that ruleth ocean ! *She sailed upon the land !*

THE PORTENT

“An old man among us crossed himself in dread ;
‘ I alone have seen her—I and others dead :
Black woe will follow—the ship of doom is here—
She hath not sailed the Irish hills since the famine year.’ ”

On past the sandhills, through the waving bent,
Right up the village street the tall spectre went ;
And watchers at the window saw towering sail and mast,
And a low sound like water and wind seethed past.

Like a dust-cloud of summer that whirlwinds lift,
On past the houses we watched the vessel drift,
Till she rose and then sank again on a hill-top high,
And the lights at her stern vanished 'mid the stars of the
sky.

What ship is this ? Is her name on earth known
That can pass without piercing of the granite stone ;
That can sail o'er the mountains, and pause not nor reel,
With Errigal's crest tossed skyward like a wave below her
keel ?

In Erin's isle of sorrow she is known since days of old ;
No storm-wind can stay her, no mountain wall withhold :
Her name is Calamity, she can come by land or sea,
And she is here, O Erin dear, for anchorage in thee.

THERE WERE TREES IN TIR-CONAL

*"The wilderness and the solitary places
shall be glad for them."*

THERE were trees in Tir-Conal of the territories
In Erin's youthful, yet remembered days,
Where now to clothe the leagues of bogland lonely
Is only heather brown or gorse ablaze ;
Where rivers go from source to sea unshaded,
Where shine in desolate moors the scattered lakes,
And sedges only are where once were willows
And curlews, where were deer in woodland brakes.

The spades of peasants oft the peat uplifting
Strike bog-black roots of oak or red of fir,
And then 'tis known, here the primeval forest
Was murmurous to all winds with leaves astir,
Where to the sky's blue rim the heath unending
Lies bare before the honey-searching bees ;
O'er camping hosts once spread the giant branches
Of oaks in autumn sounding like the seas.

There was no mountain of our many mountains,
There was no voiceful-watered purple glen,
Without its share of scarlet-berried ashes,
Without its nut-trees by the waters then ;

THERE WERE TREES IN TIR-CONAL

Round every dun of every royal chieftain
White apple-boughs shook down the blossomy showers,
And up the craggy heights like armies climbing
Went pine-trees straight as spears, and tall as towers.

Fallen in Erin are all those leafy forests ;
The oaks lie buried under bogland mould ;
Only in legends dim are they remembered,
Only in ancient books their fame is told.
But seers, who dream of times to come, have promised
Forests shall rise again where perished these ;
And of this desolate land it shall be spoken,
“ In Tir-Conal of the territories there are trees.”

MOUNTAIN SHAPES

ERRIGAL, like a high wave,
Tossing a white crest,
Up from the sea of the moorland,
Against the wind o' the West.
Glorious the peak of Errigal :
I love it all but best.

Muckish, the swine-backed mountain,
Seen in darkness dim,
Like the boar desired of Diarmuid,
That, after wounding him,
Couches to rest in slumber,
A bulk, gigantic, grim.

Marvellous shapes of mountains,
Others with these arise
Rolling in phantom pictures
For my soul's remembering eyes—
Purple under the starlight,
Or paling in sapphire skies.

Like a city wall Cnoc Gulban
Stands up by the Northern sea,
And the dwellers within that city
A giant race must be :
The clouds, like smoke of their hearth-fires,
Float white, and far, and free.

MOUNTAIN SHAPES

The Twelve Pins of Connemara,
As sailing by I went,
Were a camp of Danaan heroes,
For each of twelve a tent ;
And the hosting of Lugh Lamh-fada
Was seen where the mists were rent.

The high reek of Holy Patrick,
From over the Island bay,
Is a cairn up-heaped by pilgrims
Who hither came to pray ;
But Slemish top is rounded
As a farmer stacks his hay.

In Alba, over the water,
'Mid mountains, a stately crowd,
I saw upon bare Ben Arthur
The Cobbler up in a cloud ;
And Edinboro' is guarded
By its lion fierce and proud.

A sea-queen's breasts in beauty
The paps of Jura lie ;
And the high bridge ridge of the Coolins
Upheaved on the rim of Skye,
Is the ledge where the Red Branch noblest
Went reeling in boyhood by.

For the highest of Erin's mountains
No likeness I can make,
Though I journeyed by Carran Tuohil,

MOUNTAIN SHAPES

And did not sleep but wake,
I saw not the upturned sickle,
For I looked towards Killarney's Lake.

Like Errigal, like a wave-top,
Save for the snow of the crest,
Is the fairy mountain of Munster
Where the Bandon flows from the West :
Owen I love, and Errigal ;
But I love another best.

And it is not high Lurig Edain
That looks from the Antrim shore,
Nor thy wooded slopes, Slieve Donard,
Nor thy gate, O Barnes Mór.
Dear is each peak of Donegal,
But there's one that I love more.

Look up from the streets of the city,
Look high beyond tower and mast,
What hand of what Titan sculptor
Smote the crags on the mountain vast ?
Made when the world was fashioned,
Meant with the world to last,
The glorious face of the sleeper
That slumbers above Belfast.

A COUNTRY GIRL

All Souls' Eve in Dublin.

SHE has come in to light
Tall candles that will shine to-night
Round scarlet flowers in a silver cup,
Round golden fruit and nuts red-brown
On a table set for ten to sup,
With sparkle of glasses up and down,
Pearl-handled knives and painted plates,
The glow through glass of mellow wine,
In porcelain shells there are crystal dates
And shadows of ferns on the damask fine.

.

She thinks, how far away
Her kindred at the end of day
Will have three slender candles lit
And set them at a window small,
And after that will quiet sit
And make no feast at all,
But all the time can pray
For each departed soul that they remember
At the coming of November.

.

A COUNTRY GIRL

At Rosary hour she knows how they will kneel,
She knows each usual place :
Hers from that home the only absent face,
But in thought she is with them there,
She sees the ageing father worn and pale,
She hears the oft-repeated joyous " Hail,"
And echoing to the Angel's words the prayer,
Alternate heavenly greeting and human cry
Of those who born to die
Would have the Lord's good Mother intercede
For them in the hour of need.
Tears fill her eyes, she thinks that she would kneel
To make her own appeal,
Not there among the rest,
But in the little curtained room apart
Before the picture of the Sacred Heart.
So she might ease the sorrow in her breast
There by the neatly painted mantel-shelf
Where she had placed herself
The Virgin gowned in white, with girdle blue,
And little golden roses on her feet,
Raised hands and countenance sweet.
She thinks that she would stay
In there alone to pray,
Speaking the name of one among the dead
Not spoken in her father's or mother's prayer,
Not ever mentioned there,
A stranger to them almost, who did not know
That he had loved her so.

.

A COUNTRY GIRL

Thus sorrowful she stands,
The taper slanted in her idle hands.
Eyes lifted tearful to the branches bare
Above that Dublin Square ;
She seeing them remembers other trees
Wide-branched, now bare like these,
By sad Kilbeheny's ancient graveyard wall.
" If I was home at all,"
She is musing now, " I would go that way to-night,
I would walk that way alone in the care of God,
All doors are shut and no one comes abroad
Because they think the souls are out to-night,
So in the windows they set the candles three
To let the wanderers know " We pray for ye
And love ye yet, but would look on ye with dread
Returning from the dead."
" But oh," she thinks, " I would not fear to see
The one that is dear to me.
I would walk the graveyard road in wind and rain,
And let him come and speak to me again,
And answer him and tell him he was dear,
And I am so lonely here."
She wonders, standing dumb,
Since miracles have been at sorrow's call
If God would let her own beloved come
To greet her by Kilbeheny's mouldering wall.

.

She startles now as the noiseless swinging door
Opens before a silken rustling gown.

A COUNTRY GIRL

Meekly she answers to a petulant voice
That bids her draw the lace-edged curtain down ;
Then she must alter all that does not please,
Gravely attentive to each curt command,
Having blotted out the stars among the trees
With slow reluctant hand.

Ah, not in praying can this night be passed,
But she, for thoughtless revellers met to dine,
She whose own lips are used to fast,
Must hand the silver dish and pour the wine
'Mid babble of idle gossip, followed after
By shallow tinkling laughter.

One lady, bold of eye and bare of shoulder,
Relates discreetly in an undertone
The very latest news that someone told her,
Someone who knows just all that's to be known
About that case—horrid even to mention,
Only she does it with the best intention,
Thinking the world should hear the truth alone.
A few in mincing accents talk of art,
Discuss the latest book, some picture fine,
A favourite actress in a novel part
In which they say she has ventured o'er the line
Of anything yet dared upon the stage
Since passing of the prim Victorian age.

And yonder at the table's end
Where sits the dull but learned professor,
The talk to serious lines will tend,
Of Plunkett's going, his successor,

A COUNTRY GIRL

And what his chances are at present
With aid of recent legislation
To civilize the Irish peasant
And raise him from his brutish station.
And all the while, she serving here,
Sweet-voiced, soft-footed, moves around,
A spirit from another sphere,
A captive on unhallowed ground.
Where no one has the grace to pray
Upon the eve of All Souls' Day,
Where no one has the thought to curb
The cynic's sneer, the worldly jest,
The argument that might disturb
The comfort of a pious breast.
They think "she would not understand,"
But she is wiser than the wise,
A simple Southern country girl
Whose faith is, that her dead will rise.

THE DARK PALACE

THERE beams no light from thy hall to-night,
Oh House of Fame ;
No mead-vat seethes and no smoke upwreathes
O'er the hearth's red flame ;
No high bard sings for the joy of thy kings,
And no harpers play ;
No hostage moans at thy dungeon-rings
As in Muircherteach's day.

Fallen ! fallen to ruin all in
The covering mould ;
The painted yew, and the curtains blue,
And the cups of gold ;
The linen, yellow as the corn when mellow,
That the princes wore ;
And the mirrors brazen for your queens to gaze in,
They are here no more.

The sea-bird's pinion thatched Gormlai's grianan ;
And through windows clear,
Without crystal pane, in her Ard-righ's reign
She looked forth from here.
There were quilts of eider on her couch of cedar ;
And her silken shoon
Were as green and soft as the leaves aloft
On a bough of June.

THE DARK PALACE

Ah, woe unbounded ! where the harp once sounded
The wind now sings ;
The gray grass shivers where the mead in rivers
Was out-poured for kings ;
The min and the methel are lost together
With the spoil of the spears ;
The strong dún only has stood dark and lonely
Through a thousand years.

But I am not in woe for the wine-cup's flow,
For the banquet's cheer,
For tall princesses with their trailing tresses
And their brodered gear ;
My grief and my trouble for this palace noble
With no chief to lead
'Gainst the Saxon stranger on the day of danger
Out of Aileach Neid.

A MAYO LOVE SONG

It is far, and it is far,
To Connemara where you are,
To where its purple glens enfold you
As glooming heavens that hold a star.

But they shall shine, they yet shall shine,
Colleen, those eyes of yours on mine
Like stars that after eve assemble,
And tremble over the mountain line.

Though it be far, though it be far,
I'll journey over to where you are,
By grasslands green that lie between
And shining lakes at Mullingar.

And we shall be, and we shall be,
Oh, colleen lonely, beloved by me,
For evermore on a moor of Mayo
'Mid heather singing like the sea.

LAMENT OF THE DARK DAUGHTER

*The mother of Red Hugh O'Donnell bewails
his captivity.*

MY Prince, my son, my dearest one ! the chosen
Tanist of wild Tir-Conal and tribe-lands all,
Looks no more where the tide to Swilly flows in,
Watches, instead of the wind in the billowy wall,
The window-bars of a dungeon he must repose in
Far and away to-day from Donegal.

How shall he pine in prison, the wild-bird-hearted ?
How shall he idly sit, who was wont to go
Swiftly as any salmon that ever darted
Ocean-ward through the thunder of Assaroe,
Or any wing-spread eagle that ever departed
Up and aloft to Errigal's peak of snow ?

Steed of my boy ! another shall now bestride thee ;
The falcon trained to his hand must a stranger fling ;
Sword of my son ! O sword, when at first he tried thee,
Thou wert said by bards to be in the grasp of a King ;
And now, O blade ! ere ever in blood he had dyed thee,
Thou art fettered, even as he, to the wall by a ring.

LAMENT OF THE DARK DAUGHTER

White was his foot as foam on the strand reclining;
Red as the weed on the rocks to his shoulder grew
The radiant curling locks of his coulin twining
Around a face that flowers might be likened to;
Where between the rose and the snows of his forehead
 shining,
The fair-beamed stars of his eyes were blossom-blue.

Fierce he was in his wrath, in his words unsparing;
Sudden in rage as fire when the heath is dry;
Impatient of any curb, of rebuke unbearing;
He was not born for rebuke with the warrior eye,
But to rouse up the hearts of hosts to deeds of daring,
And watch over fields of blood his foemen fly.

Straight he was, and strong-built as many an older;
Manly, tall, but with innocent youthful ways,
The boy's wild heart beat under the man's broad shoulder;
A man's resolve made sterner the boyish gaze
Of this son of mine, who was meant for a nation-moulder,
To be winner of soldier-trust and of bardic praise.

Therefore is it to-day that the Saxons round him
Have woven the spider-web of their treacherous guiles,
Borne him far from his home and in prison bound him,
Knowing well that, if free of their treacherous wiles,
Dangerous more than a host to their rule they had found
 him,
Battle-shaft from the armoury of the isles.

Battle-shaft! thou wert promised of old, in the pages
Of Erin's prophets foretold of by Columcille,

LAMENT OF THE DARK DAUGHTER

To come from the utmost north at the end of the ages,
And sweep the foemen from fort, and valley, and hill ;
But, alas ! when war on thy native border rages,
Battle-shaft, thou art helpless to work them ill.
MacDonnell, lord of the Isles, though he is my father,
O'Donnell of Tir-Conal, my husband, too,
With all his brood of brethren, I would gather
To be hostage-held, my Prince, as the price of you ;
Yea, I would lie in my dungeon and die there rather
Than leave you to live there unransomed, my peerless
Hugh.

Yea, I would yield as thy ransom the rocks of Fannet,
And every inch of the land to the Erne's white fall,
Lake-abounding Boylagh and mountainous Bannet,
And from Aran to Inishtrahull, the islands all,
All save the Rock of Doone with my son upon it,
Chieftain-chosen to waken to war with his call.

For, O Hugh ! if you but now stood again on
That chieftain-making stone, if your clansmen tall
Could come to rally around you at Kilmacrenan,
Soon would the Saxon viceroy and vassals all,
Knights, and nobles, and spearmen, with spur and pennon,
Fly far and away to-day from Donegal.

THE BLESSING OF THE BROWN FRIAR

TAKE the blessing of the brown Friar with you, Craoibhin,
Now you're leaving us to cross the wintry sea ;
For right worthy is your work to have a blessing,
And 'tis fitting to be blessed by such as he.

Take the blessing of the Friar, the son of Francis,
And his prayer that soars to heaven by day and night ;
For the work that you have now in hand for Eri,
The blessing of the brown Friar is your right.

As he stands there grave and tall before the people,
Speaking nobly, speaking loud ;
Speaking words to which the Holy One will hearken,
There is awe upon the crowd.

There is awe ; and in the awe-compelling stillness,
As I look on the rope-girdle and the gown,
My memory summons many another picture
Of the Friars in the garb of brown.

Such a Friar in such a robe, with such a girdle,
In a high castle room of courtly Spain ;
Whose pious lips speak holy consolation,
Whose tender hands allay the body's pain.

THE BLESSING OF THE BROWN FRIAR

Whose sad voice utters prayers for the departing,
While tall tapers glimmer round the bed ;
Whose Irish heart scarce checks the wail of sorrow,
To behold Hugh O'Donnell lying dead.

And when to crown defeat befalls disaster,
In the after-coming years,
In secret flight, at deepest gloom of midnight,
The ship of Calamity appears.

Mid the warriors dumb in grief and women weeping,
On that voyage of O'Neill from his tribe,
By the chieftain's side a faithful record keeping,
Behold the Franciscan scribe.

Far away, very far away, from Uladh,
Far away from each ancestral rightful home,
Rests O'Neill's dust with his son's, rests the O'Donnell's,
On a hill that looks forth on Rome.

Their carven stones are seen below the altar,
Where the white book of the Gospel glitters down ;
And the guardians of the graves of these our mighty,
Are the Friars in the garb of brown.

Midst the mounds beside the sea in far Tir-Conal
My memory is picturing many a cell ;
Midst the graves that lie around a ruined abbey,
Where the humble Franciscans dwell ;
Their task in life to garner from the pages
Of all chronicles come down since olden days,
The annals of the ancient Isle of Fodhla,
Unto Michael O'Clery give the praise.

THE BLESSING OF THE BROWN FRIAR

Cromwell's curse (O black and bitter curse of Cromwell)
Falls on Ireland—scorpion scourge in iron hand,
Banishment for Priest and Friar, or death, else
Connacht's bogs for Irish lords of Irish land.

 In the mountain glen behold a secret muster
 Round an altar sheltered deep among the rocks ;
 And the faithful Friar has come from far to tend them,
 Fearless shepherd of the scattered flocks.

Such the pictures that my memory brings before me,
As I stand on the verge of the crowd ;
As I listen to the words of the Franciscan,
Speaking nobly, speaking loud.

 Take the blessing of the brown Friar, therefore, Craoibhin,
 Now you're leaving us to travel long and far,
 To the over-ocean westward lying places,
 Where the clans of our exiles are.

For the ancient, songful, glorious speech of Banba,
In which saints and sages spoke,
Must not vanish as all goodly things that vanished
Since the Sassenach laid her isle under yoke.

 Late the hour, yet brave at heart in hope to save it,
 Thou art going forth for help across the sea ;
 And the brown-garbed people-serving son of Francis
 Sends his blessing forth with thee.

THE HARPER OF THE ONLY GOD

At the hour of midnight, a time of full moon,
Cuchulain lay, but slept not, on a couch of the dún ;
Winds were not breathing, waters were still ;
There came a sound of harping across the hill.

The first notes of that harping, they were soft and low
As the voice of his dear love of long ago ;
The next notes rang clearly as a triumph call
On a red field of conflict when champions fall.

At the first notes of the music his eyes grew dim ;
At the next, the rage of battle arose in him ;
He leaps to the window, and, lo, the minstrel stands
With a harp of silver in slender hands.

“ I am come,” said Cuchulain ; “ I hear thee sing ” ;
He said, “ Hast thou a message from Conchobar, my
King ? ”
He said, “ Hast thou a challenge of combat for me ?
And, maker of sweet music, whose herald mayst thou be ? ”

“ Son of Suailtim, ’tis thee I seek,
Whose message I must utter, His name I may not speak,
For a long way faring, the summons that I bring
It is from a greater than Uladh’s King.

THE HARPER OF THE ONLY GOD

“I fare from farther than Emain Macha’s fort ;
I serve in a higher than the Red Branch court ;
And thither, Cuchulain, thy journey now must be,
For the Lord of that Caiseal, He calls for thee.”

“Though thy King than Conchobar be far more great,
Long for Cuchulain’s coming shall He wait ;
Not Rome’s proud Ardrigh, the laurel-crowned,
Shall have at his feasting my Uladh’s hound.

“Bard, bring homeward this answer then,
Thou hast seen me, the Hound of the Ulstermen ;
Kings are my cattle, hosts my hunting-prey,
Uladh I guard until my dying day.”

At that word of dying, the strange bard sighed,
And his gaze on the hero was sorrowful-eyed :
“Faithful hound of Muirtheimne’s shore,
The days of thy watching are forever o’er.

“Thou must come to my King, who all kings controls,
The land of life and the place of souls,
The shield round earth and the ocean broad,
For I am the Herald of the only God :

“Death men call me ; when I draw near
The lips of the mighty are blanched with fear :
So I chant no song, but with signal dumb,
To my Lord’s presence I bid thee come.

“But thou, Cuchulain, hast since a boy
Sought for my presence with fearless joy,
Followed my path o’er the blood-soaked ground
Where the sharp bolts of battle on shields resound.

THE HARPER OF THE ONLY GOD

“ Therefore, O youth of the matchless steeds,
Whom bards belaud for undaunted deeds, .
Thy highest praise from a chanter’s breath
Is spoken now by the voice of Death.”

Cuchulain answered, “ I know thee now,
My comrade sworn, by my knighthood’s vow ;
Then say to our Lord, the whole world’s King,
What gift of tribute in going shall I bring ?

“ There hang in my house on Dundéalga’s height
A hundred war-shields brazen bright,
Swords and mantles and steeds in stall,
Save the Liath Macha, I would render all.”

Then smiled the harper, “ O son of Suailtim,
Thy great deeds for Erin were service to Him ;
And in drops of thy heart’s blood on Uladh’s sod
Thou shalt count thy tribute to the only God.”

.

Next day at sunset, erect, alone,
Cuchulain died by a standing stone—
Died, but fell not, with sword in hand,
And his face to the foes of the Northern land.

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

“As for that red-handlike lurid flame seen afar through the smoke of a burning dún, it is the red hand of Emain Macha, the warlike symbol of the North, woven by immortal hands in a banner white as snow.”

To the fort at Emain Macha, to the Red Branch house of feasting,

Where the sons of Ir assembled in King Conor's shining hall,

Up and onward from Muirtheimne came a breathless herald hasting,

Who uplifted from the threshold where he passed this rousing call :

“Leave the board, O men of Uladh ; leave the mead within the methers ;

Hark no more to laud of harpers, for your praising lilted sweet ;

With your hearts on fire for battle, come in marching ranks together,

With each chieftain high before you in his painted chariot seat.

“Rouse ye up ! The Olnemacta are arrayed upon your border,

And, in threatening battle order, they are facing to the ford,

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

Which in your army's place hath had till now one only
warder,
To dismay their onward marching by the terror of his
sword;
For the guardian Hound of Uladh, the Defender of his
Nation,
Through long days hath kept his station, through long
nights hath watched the shore,
But hath sunken now, the victim of a druid incantation,
And the rallying hosts of Connacht meet his dauntless
arm no more.

“Though the bravest and the brightest of the Red Branch
heroes slumbers,
And a spell his great heart cumpers, yet the foe shall be
o'erthrown,
If the army of all Uladh, rising up in countless numbers,
Come to keep the ford of slaughters that Cuchulain kept
alone:
For the mighty Olnemacta have come eastward for your
harming,
For the burning of your palaces, the pillage of your lands;
Whilst ye sit in rusting idleness, the hosts of Meave are
arming,
And the hills of Erin tremble 'neath the tramping of her
bands!”

This the call! But never answer came to all his loud
appealing,
Then more boldly he made venture to come nigh to
Conor's seat,

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

But no word at all was deigned him, though he tarried
humbly kneeling,
With his hands of supplication clasped around the royal
feet ;
For a curse had come upon them, and a dreaming and
a madness ;
Each sat, he thought, in solitude, nor saw the other's
face ;
Some laughed in foolish merriment, some wept in idiot
sadness,
And the herald rose despairing and went mournful from
the place.

Onward paced he, sad to weeping over Emain's foul
dishonour
And the ruin fallen upon her, without chieftain for her
stay ;
Outward passed he to the ball-green, where the foster-
lings of Conor,
All the noblest youths of Uladh, shouted gladly at their
play ;
No sadness dimmed the eyes o'er which the radiant locks
were curling ;
No blight had marred the ruddy cheek, no weakness
touched the arm ;
Swift their feet were in the game and strong the strokes
they made at hurling,
For the guileless hearts of boyhood had the curse no
power to harm.

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

Never curse had power to harm them, and he gazed upon
them proudly,
For he tarried in his going to behold them dauntless-
eyed,
Till his heart was rent with sorrow and he raised his
clamour loudly,
While the players from their pastime flocked in wonder
to his side ;
“ Oh my grief ! ” he said, “ to see you in a land without
defender,
Whose unconquered chief lies cold and dead through
spells of poisonous hate ;
Oh my grief, to see this courage that in youths of age so
tender
Shall attain to knighthood’s battling years, for our defence
too late.”

With a cheer of acclamation, to the armoury of Emain,
That the champions’ falchions beam in, flinging hurleys
from their hands,
Go the radiant ranks of boyhood, through the halls their
fathers dream in,
To gird against their slender limbs those ponderous battle-
brands ;
Forth they hasten, southward marching, through the
fenland and the forest ;
O’er the passes of Slieve Fuad, and through Muirtheimne’s
marshy plain,

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

Calling ever to the herald: "Lead where Uladh's need
is sorest;
We are warders of her borders till Cuchulain wakes
again."

Oh glorious were the faces of those youths in warriors'
places,
And the bright angelic races known in Erin as the
Sidhe;
On the breezes sweeping o'er them, flung a banner out
before them
That till all the ages end shall Uladh's flag of battle be.
White, beyond all snow in whiteness, were the wafted folds
enwoven,
With a fiery sign of promise that all champions of our
land,
In as just a cause contending as the fight Cuchulain
strove in,
Should have help for Erin's saving of a more than mortal
hand.

Down they came with shouts of contest and the sheen of
falchions glancing,
And they rushed across the torrent on the vast invading
horde;
There they fought and fell and perished, but they stayed
the foe's advancing
Till Cuchulain rose from slumber with his matchless
strength restored—

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

Till Cuchulain stood, and, gazing from the woodland o'er
the water,
Saw the white limbs tossed and mangled in the torrent on
the rocks,
Saw the broken weapons shining in the shallow pools of
slaughter,
And the ruddy stains of wounding on the brightness of
their locks.

Then his heart was sore with sorrow and his eyes
bedimmed with weeping
For the youths who had been keeping through long space
of perilous hours,
In the beauty of their boyhood, whilst the Red Branch
knights were sleeping,
Watch and ward beside the ford against the Olnemactian
powers.
Forth Cuchulain went to glory, o'er the stream and plain-
land gory,
But pausing in his passing ere his chariot westward rolled ;
Their laud he thus repeated : " O ye fallen, but not
defeated,
Ye shall share the conqueror's fame, who kept the land
for him to hold."

.

Youths of Uladh ! youths of Erin, though the soul of
valour slumber,
Though the voice of proud defiance in this land be heard
no more,

THE DEFENDERS OF THE FORD

Though her trusted sons be few against a host of countless
number,
Let no doubt your heart encumber, nor your lips her fall
deplore :
Face the goal that heroes sighed for ! Hold the faith that
martyrs died for,
Till the land's deliverer comes at length for rallying of the
brave.
Then your names, who fought and perished, shall in
Freedom's dawn be cherished,
Since you guarded in her sorrow's hour the land that he
shall save.

THE WAKE FEAST

A young man dead.

I CANNOT remember
That we ever told
Half the things we thought of you,
Half the praise that was your due,
Oh, heart of gold !
Or ever showed you reverence, when
You walked the land of living men,
And talked as none shall talk again,
Now your lips are cold.

The last time that we passed you by
Sad was your face,
As if across your sunlit soul
A shadowing cloud had risen to roll
For a little space.
If we had paused to praise you then,
I think you would have smiled again
With kindly grace.
But we were niggards of our praise ;
And so until an end of days
We must think at word of you always,
“ How sad was his face ! ”

.

THE WAKE FEAST

Now to your father's house
The folk come flocking in,
The neighbours and kindred
And comrades more than kin.
The candles are lit there,
The wake-feast is spread ;
They will sit the whole night long
Praising the dead.

They will praise your comeliness,
The strength of your hands,
Say "There was not known his like
In nine townlands."
They will not tell how nobleness
Had won you hate,
And that you had no praise of friends
Till now, too late.

THE WAKE FEAST

A young girl dead.

MAN of the house, soft-hearted with your sorrow,
Woman of the house, with weeping near-hand blind,
Though I spoke ye fair the day, and will again the morrow,
It is no good wish for ye I have in my mind.

Young men, talking low on seats beside the doorway,
Old men, drinking quietly on benches next the fire,
Great would be the fear and wonder would come o'er ye
If I stood up among ye now and cried out my desire.

The desire of my heart to you, oh, people, it is cruel,
Since I crossed the threshold where she is lying dead;
She was my secret love, my hidden, shining jewel,
And I would be glad the day if ye had died instead.

She was my secret love, like a star afar I saw her,
Or if out of sight I was hoping for her still,
Looking from the field, up the long roadway for her
Till I saw the walk of her, head-shawled, down-hill.

Talk then of rain, or any change of weather,
Oh, she was quick in passing and I left to stand,
Being Donal of the Rosses, a boy hired to labour
And Sigle the daughter on a farm of land.

Sealed are her lips now, the coffin here to hold her,
If I ever learn now, I have long to wait,
If she ever knew then the love I never told her
As she went head-shawled, shyly by the gate.

THE BURIAL OF DIARMUID

ON the high, sky-battlementing mountains
Above the sea,
Diarmuid lay where the boar of Gulban slew him
By Fate's decree,
Angus the De Danaan mourning for him
And his cries were three.

At the first cry, out to Inish-Murray
Through the crystal wave
Fled the salmon flocks like shafts of silver
From coast and cave ;
Up on Knocknarea Mac Alla answered,
From the Cairn of Meave.

At the second cry, the pale stars trembled
And the forest stirred,
Fled afar through ferny dale and hollow
The dappled herd.
While in clouds above the oaks arising
Flew many a bird.

At the third cry, from the couch of weeping
Rose Grainne wan,
Raised white arms of woe unto the mountain
When the new day shone :
“ Diarmuid ! 'tis for thee,” she moaned, “ that Angus
Wails at the dawn.”

THE BURIAL OF DIARMUID

“ Go !” she bade her people, “ unto burial
From yon purple height ;
Bring me down your lord, my hero lover,
My heart’s delight,
Till women raise the caoine, and warriors yield him
Due funeral rite.”

But the far-seeing eyes of Druid Angus
Pierced the future through ;
Saw her bitter tears, but also after
At a bridal new
Saw the false wife of the slain man plighted
Unto Fionn who slew.

So like the wind that rolls the clouds at morning
From the mountain rim,
Angus by Danaan might en-veiling Diarmuid
Vanished with him
And from Ben Gulban’s blood-stained heath swept south-
ward
In the dawning dim.

So Grainne, sad and fair and fickle-hearted,
Sought Ireland through,
Wailing for him whom she had craved to love her
When he scorned to woo ;
She never found the grave that Angus guarded
By the Boyne at Brugh.

A HARVESTER

I KNOW the road by which you came,
What mountain peaks you left behind,
What torrents travelling down the rocks,
And heather singing in the wind.

And how you reached a wooded land,
And climbed the green hills ridge on ridge,
And came at last to Lifford town,
And gaily over Lifford Bridge.

Not knowing by what stranger's hearth
You'd sit that night to sup and rest,
'Mid Laggan's fields or far Tyrone,
And wondered which was best.

So first you sought the chapel gate,
And entered in and bent the knee,
Then gazed in reverent wonder round
Such glorious sights to see.

And found the Virgin's Altar white,
And knelt and spoke a hopeful prayer
For guidance good and strength to shun
The dangers of the hiring fair.

Then near the dingy Market House
You stood or strolled amid a crowd
Of burly farmers striking hands
And bargaining long and loud.

A HARVESTER

And many asked your age and price,
For manly tall you looked that day,
Bearing your scarlet bundle neat,
And clad in homespun silver grey.

But still you smiled and shook your head,
Until at last you found your due,
Until at last one named the wage
Your widowed mother hoped for you.

And so it is I meet you here
Binding the sheaves in Mid-Tyrone,
Hired in the farm along the lake,
The farm my mother's kindred own.

The light of joy is in your eyes,
Gay was that snatch of music sung,
And checked to answer in surprise
My greeting in the Irish tongue.

Less joyously you drove the team,
Less merrily you tossed the hay,
Who now amid the falling corn
Can sing the harvest hours away.

You face the rustling mellow ranks,
The stubble stretching broad behind,
And till the clattering reaper comes
And lays your row of sheaves to bind.

You wait with far-off gazing eyes,
And plait the straps with hasty hands ;
Your thoughts are of a distant place,
Unlike these fertile corn-clad lands.

A HARVESTER

You see the long white road that goes
Across the bog and through the glen,
You see the snow-white mountain peaks,
You see Dunlewy Lake again.

You see a desolate, lonelier land,
Where up the moorlands of Gweedore
The road ascends, and from the height
You see your home once more.

'Mid terraces of shattered rock,
A stairway where the stream descends,
A cottage, shelterless and bleak,
And here your journey ends.

And, boy! though 'mid the Rosses rocks
Less comfort waits in storm and snow
Than in this farmland by the lake,
Boy, you are wise to go.

For oh! your mother's welcoming cry
Will hail you to the gladdest hearth,
The brightest hours, the gentlest love,
That you shall ever know on earth.

The days will pass in patient toil,
Short are the winter working days,
And long the nights when flaming high
The kindled turf-sods blaze.

And you will sit with mirth and song,
Your kindly Gaelic kin among,
Where no man loves the stranger's rule,
And no man speaks the stranger's tongue.

A NOCTURNE

In memory of Marjorie Arthur.

ON a night of sorrow I cried aloud her name.
God, who heard, said, "Hasten," and in my dream she
came.

She stood ; I saw her clearly by the moon's white flame ;
Her eyes were sweet as ever ; her voice was yet the same.

No illumining radiance lit her girlish brow—
As in life I loved her, I beheld her now ;
I smiled in joy to greet her ; nor did I think it strange
That death had wrought no change.

She bore with her no blossoms unknown to earthly land,
No tall white flowers of paradise, stately and grand ;
There were violets on her breast—blue violets—
And a red rose in her hand.

"How have you gathered ?" I asked my gentle one,
"In that unchanging region of never ceasing sun,
Where the March winds blow never, and no rain-shower
ever wets,
Those little violets ?"

"I have had them long," she said ; "I have loved them
much,
They were the last flowers given my living hands to touch,
And in the fevered night of pain before my death,
Sweet was the fragrance of their breath."

A NOCTURNE

“ But surely you have gathered in the celestial land
That other flower which lovingly is kept in your hand ?
For there is not growing here on the mountain in the
 snows
Any such crimson rose.”

With looks of tenderest reproach my words were met.
“ Dear, I have remembered ! Dear, can you forget ?
Seaward north of Derry, it fed on sun and dew ;
It was a gift from you.”

And I shall always treasure it as priceless in worth,
God has made nothing fairer than the little flowers of
 earth,
As He has no more to give in His heaven above
Than your own heart's gift of never-changing love.

MICHAEL CAVANAGH

Died at Washington, U.S.A., June, 1900.

You were very dear to me, Michael Cavanagh;
You were very dear to me, and I was dear to you;
For you told me of the days gone by and the friends you
cherished,
And I told how in changing times the old faith grew.

For long long years you were gone far from the men
of Ireland,
Since the fateful bier to her Fenians dear you brought
o'er ocean blue;
And though the hope failed in which thronging thousands
buried him,
Failure, Michael, could not alter you.

For friend whose face in life I had never looked on,
The inmost thought of all your thoughts my own heart
knew;
How you trusted on to age and in years of exile
That God would bring dear Ireland yet her troubles
through.

Now in that strange land death at last has found you,
And there, far from where comrades are, they have buried
you;
But my grief! Michael! that your grave is not here with
theirs in Ireland,
Under shaking of the grass and shining of the dew.

THE HORSEMEN OF AILEACH

'Tis told in tales of wonder how Aileach's palace under,
Kings in countless numbers lie still as carven stone ;
And steeds with them in hiding are reined for warriors'
riding

To the last of Erin's battles from that cave of Inish Owen.

And once in summer's shining, on Fahan's shore
reclining,

The hissing of the heather and the droning of the sea,
And the lisp of wavelets creeping, they lulled my brain to
sleeping,

And the glory of that story in a vision burst on me.

In the moments of my slumber, years I seemed to number,
Centuries flew by like the down of thistle light ;
And through gloom of Slavery's sadness, my heart still
leapt for gladness

Or throbbed in wild impatience for the ages' swifter flight.

I knew (God's angel told it) mine eyes should yet behold
it,

Though patriots' blood in torrents poured and martyrs' like
a shower,

Our Erin's resurrection from the tomb of long subjection,
And the dawn from gulfs of darkness of her freedom's
shining hour.

THE HORSEMEN OF AILEACH

I knew through years of weeping how the caverned hill
was keeping

The most valiant of our chieftains in a trance-sleep still
and dumb,

'Neath the ferns and grasses waving for the hour of Erin's
saving,

And but waiting for the summons of one nobler yet to
come.

Then when stars wheeled down and whitened, as the rose
of sunrise brightened,

A wind along the ocean came rushing to my ear;

And through roar of billows drumming, softly whispered,
“*He is coming,*”

Then a call along the mountain rang, announcing “*He
is here !*”

Oh, in that hour of wonder, the air was thrilled by
thunder

And like a sword's unsheathing the cloud flung up the
flame,

And with crash of hillside rending, through shattered rocks
descending,

To the last of Erin's battles the host of Aileach came.

One led in royal splendour, his face in grace most tender,
His voice like battle's trumpet-blast, his hand unmatched
in might;

His deeds shed fame victorious on a name by far more
glorious

Than the name of all the noblest that e'er strove for
Erin's right.

THE HORSEMEN OF AILEACH

They passed—and all my dreaming was then of falchions
gleaming,
Of valleys loud with shouting, and of rivers flowing red,
Of the Saxon sea-ward flying, amidst heaps of vanquished
dying,
And the sunburst banner floating o'er a youthful conqueror's head.

Then at hush of battle thunder, a cry of joy and wonder
Went up from warriors thronging round a leader no man
knew :
“ Who art thou,” the chieftains shouted, “ who the Saxon
host hast routed ?
Who art thou who waked and led us ? ” and the hill-
sides echoed “ Who ? ”

OWEN WHO DIED

A '67 Man.

I HAVE seen all of the Ulstermen
From tide to tide :
There was never a one of them
Like Owen, who died.
And there will never be sons to them,
To run or to ride,
Like the boy who carried the guns to them
O'er the waters wide.

Ireland's soldiers were sent to,
To form rank again.
My soul ! they were well content to,
Having idle lain
Since the black day of Ballingarry, they'd
Thought it too long they tarried,
And for Mitchel, to exile carried,
Their hearts were in pain.

You have heard of O'Donovan Rossa
From nigh Skibbereen ;
You have heard o' the Hawk o' the Hill-top,
If you have not seen ;
You have read of the Reaper whose reaping
Was of grain half green :
Such were the men among us
In the days that have been.

OWEN WHO DIED

Owen was only a boy then,
With hope in his eyes,
And fire of the fighting joy when
He was scarce at man's size ;
Lips that were coaxers to laughter,
Till, dumb with surprise,
All listened to words that came after,
For Owen was wise.

I could not tell you one half what
He planned and he did ;
The tales that he told, and we laughed at,
The places he hid :
His journeys, his ventures, his dangers,
The friends that he found among strangers,
The foes turned to Freedom's avengers,
Wild to do as he bid.

Right off to the coast-line of Connacht
'Twas he carried word
To the boys who were waiting upon it,
Of how Ireland was stirred.
His hand set a beacon alight
To burn on by day and by night.
Sudden his coming and flight—
He was gone like a bird.

Then near came the day to uprouse, and
'Tis peril that tries ;
Of men we had many a thousand,
But how could they rise ?

OWEN WHO DIED

Soldiers ?—With never a gun for them ;
Something would have to be done for them.
Danger ?—'twould only be fun for him :
He'd go in disguise.

How he went, and the place they were got from,
I never must tell,
Save to those who want more of the lot from
The same place as well.
Enough—they were brought, and if all in
Command had but done as he'd done,
Every Fenian from Mallow to Malin
Would have shouldered his gun.

God help us ! The fates sure were spited
On the Sassenach side ;
And Owen, who always united
Where envy'd divide,
Whom danger had lured like a lover
And Death like a bride :
Death won—and the grave-sods now cover
Our Owen who died.

His name ?—Well, the books do not hold it
That tell of those days ;
And 'twas often himself had not told it,
Having worked not for praise ;
But some true hearts yet treasure the name of him,
And God's self will measure the fame of him,
When Old Ireland will never hear shame of him,
On the Day of all days.

A BENEDICTION

DEAR little boy,
Soft-handed, playing with white daisies now,
Playing above tree shadows on the grass
Where sorrowful I pass,
A gloom upon the sunlight of your joy
Seems to fall down whilst I am laying now
A kiss upon the brightness of your brow,
For with that kiss I did not wish you joy,
Dear little boy.

But this I wish for you,
Not fortune, not much ease, not blissful days,
Not overmuch of even well-won praise.
Not even at end of life your labours due—
But that beneath those little faltering feet,
In sacrifice complete,
A hard path may be chosen, the upward way,
On which I pause to-day—
Pause, helpless, weary, and can walk no more,
Whose work in life is o'er.

And I bequeath,
When I must rest my share of earth beneath,
My days of toil being done,
The hope of this so nearly hopeless heart
To you, weak little one,
To be cherished and held apart,

A BENEDICTION

Perhaps by failure to be tried and shaken,
Yet not by you forsaken ;
But kept, as I have kept it, handed on
Till, when you too are dust beneath the flowers,
Triumph at last is ours,
When darkness yields to dawn ;
And may it be our best of heaven to know
That God has made it so.

Now you may run,
White-pinafores, into the spreading sun ;
Mid shadows racing as the clouds pass by,
Go, play, as thoughtless as the butterfly
The white, gay thing that you are chasing after,
With ringing childish laughter ;
And I, whose innocent days of mirth are o'er,
Seeing you look to me and laugh again,
Feel hope steal back into my heart once more—
Hope, with this thought of pain,
That, oh ! you would be frightened if you knew
All I have wished for you.

THE MAN ON THE WHEEL

A MAN goes by on a wheel with the rain on his face,
Against the way of the wind, and he not caring ;
Goes on through the winter night towards a lonesome
distant place,
For his heart is hot with the glow of the ancient hero-
daring.

He slows on the slant of the hill, and must walk the
higher road,
For he knows of an eager crowd that waits in a lighted
hall ;
The blast is sharp from the north, on the mountain breast
it has snowed,
And they murmur now of him, " He will hardly come at
all."

" We will wile away the time with fiddle, and dance, and
song ;
The way," they say, " is rough and the school too far to
reach " ;
But wait—a stir at the door and in through the jostling
throng
Comes the man skin-drenched from his wheel, who had
said he would come to teach.

THE MAN ON THE WHEEL

He has come—like the bringer of fire, who in fighting-days went out

With news that the clans must rise, upholding a flaming brand ;

Another, and yet another, grasped it and bore it about,
Till the rally had gone with the fire o'er the width of the waiting land.

And the fire he has brought to-night through the winter rain and storm

Is the rallying hope that our race shall live and shall yet prevail ;

See the eyes of the young men glisten, and the aged lean to listen

To the glorious glowing speech of the yet unconquered Gael.

So here at the end of the book I have gathered of hero lays

That tell of great deeds done in battle 'mid flash of steel ;
I set the last of my songs, the one I have made to praise
The man whom I saw through rain and wind go past on his flying wheel.

FAINNE GEAL AN LAE

*“ Until the day break, and the shadows
flee away.”*

*Ere the long roll of the ages end
And the days of time are done
The Lord shall unto Erin send
His own appointed One,
Whose soul must wait the hour of Fate,
His name be known to none ;
But his feet shall stand on the Irish land
In the rising of the sun.*

*In darkness of our captive night,
Whilst storms the watch-tower shake,
Some shall not sleep, but vigil keep
Until the morning break ;
Until through clouds of threatening hate,
And seas of sorrow o'er,
The first red beam of the sun-burst gleam
Illumines Erin's shore.*

*Oh ! perfect, pure, exalted One,
For whom in prayer we wait,
Of Irish-born thou happiest son
And noblest of the great ;
As night to noon goes swift and soon,
May years now roll away
And bring the hour of thy conquering power
And the dawning of the day !*

NOTES

NOTES

“MOUNTAIN SHAPES,” page 30.

Carran Tuohill is said by Dr. Joyce to signify “a reversed sickle.” The Coolin Hills in Skye bear the name of Cuchulain, who, in his youth, crossed their giddy precipices, by a perilous bridge, on his way to the house of the woman champion, Scathach, who taught him feats of arms. The historic Cavehill above Belfast has the outline of the statuesque profile of a human face.

“THE BLESSING OF THE BROWN FRIAR,” page 44.

This poem was commenced on the occasion of Dr. Douglas Hyde's departure on his mission to America, when, on his passing through Cork, he was received by an immense demonstration in the streets of that city, and, proceeding to the Municipal Buildings, a valedictory address was delivered by Father Augustine, O.S.F. In the course of this eloquent address, the Franciscan, in grave and impressive terms, adjured him and the listening crowd not to think little of “The Blessing of the Friar.”

A Catholic lady, on reading this poem, recalled the fact that *An Craoibhin* had passed through the Californian city of St. Francis on the eve of the terrible earthquake and fire which demolished it, and that the money collected there by him for the Gaelic cause was returned as an offering to the fund for relief of the sufferers.

“MICHAEL CAVANAGH,” page 67.

Michael Cavanagh, a poet and propagandist of the '67 era, survived to take an active part in founding the Gaelic movement in America. He was one of the envoys sent over with the body of Terence Bellew MacManus to Ireland in 1861. See John O'Leary's “Recollections,” vol. I., chap. xix.

“OWEN WHO DIED,” page 71.

“The Hawk o' the Hill-top” and “The Reaper” are respectively James Stephens and John O'Mahony, founders of the Fenian brotherhood. How they came by those names is told in Doheny's book, “The Felon's Track.” Michael Cavanagh, mentioned in a previous poem, was O'Mahony's secretary and attached friend, and wrote a touching Elegy to his memory, which has been translated into Irish by “Padraic” of the New York Gaelic Society.

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